

# DANGEROUS ERRORS,

CONTAINED IN

Mr. SMITH's PUBLICATION

ON THE

NATURE, NECESSITY, AND DESIGN OF THE  
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

STATED AND REFUTED,

By ALEX. SIMPSON,

Minister of the Gospel at Pittenweem.

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*One is your master, even Christ. Matth. xxiii. 10.*

*I will hear what God the Lord will speak. Pf. lxxxv. 8.*

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EDINBURGH;

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To my esteemed Reverend Brethren in the  
Relief Presbytery of Fife;

To the respectable Elders and Managers  
of their several Congregations;

To the worthy Heads of Families, and  
pious Christians under their Pastoral Care;

The following Letters,  
in Defence of Divine Truth,

are inscribed

by their humble Servant,

ALEX. SIMPSON.



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## P R E F A C E.

I FIND it is expected, that in this Preface I should defend the conduct of those brethren of the Relief presbytery of Dysart, who have appeared in opposition to the errors and unfounded charges contained in Mr. Smith's publications. On this subject, there is no need for saying much. If they contain many and dangerous errors, contrary to the holy Scriptures, and our explanatory standards, every serious Christian must see it was our duty to endeavour, by gentle measures, to recover him from the error of his way. That they do contain these, the following Letters will show, with, alas! too much strength of evidence. It is very true, Mr. Smith has accused the presbytery, both in private letters, as having persecuted him for having published the most orthodox sentiments, and also in the synod, for having acted irregularly toward him: but, as he hath made no attack upon us before the world in our judicial capacity, I think it improper to trouble my readers with saying any thing more in our defence, except that Mr. S. knows I have by far too much to say.

The following Letters were begun about two months before I heard of Mr. Smith's attempt to betray the sacred trust committed to him by the presbytery, chiefly with the view of preventing, as far as I could, the baneful influence of his pernicious errors, after other means had failed. I wished also to rouse the attention of some of my brethren of the Relief synod to a more careful perusal



perusal of this author's writings, than I had reason to believe had been formerly given to them; persuaded, that the friendship which was shewn him did not arise from an agreement of sentiment, but from a persuasion that his publications did not contain errors contrary to the word of God.

It was at the earnest importunity of several of my brethren in the ministry, that I undertook to lay open the nature and tendency of the principles advanced by Mr. S. and their opinion continues the same, though Mr. S. hath gone into the scheme of the chapel of ease. His pamphlets are not the less likely to be read on this account; and therefore the reason of these Letters seeing the light is as strong as ever. Unless Mr. S. is greatly changed, I have reason to expect that I shall be treated with the same contempt and misrepresentation with which I have, on some occasions, been treated already, as well as others of my brethren. But as this meets me in support of the truths and laws of Jesus, I glory in shame: and I trust no provocation shall induce me to retaliate. If Mr. S. thinks proper to reply with the argument of a man, and in the spirit of a Christian, I shall consider of the propriety of an answer. It disgraces the dignity of our office, to contend for divine truth with any weapon of unrighteousness.

I hope I have written from a good will to the glory of God. I commit what I have said into his hands for a blessing, with whom is the residue of the Spirit.

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## GENERAL CONTENTS.

Letter I. is an introduction to the rest.

Let. II. contains Mr. S.'s argument against vindictive justice belonging to the nature of God, and his agreement with Socinians on that subject. It also shows, that, on the subject of the demerit of sin, Socinus was orthodox, but Mr. S. erroneous.

Let. III. contains an argument from the perfection of God's nature, in support of the doctrine of vindictive justice.

Let. IV. contains evidence from the holy Scripture, that it is essential to the nature of God to punish sin.

Let. V. points out our author's erroneous account of the constituent parts of a divine law, and contains proof that the penalty is no constituent part thereof.

Let. VI. shows, that the supreme design of God in the giving of his law, was not the welfare of his subjects, but his own glory; and that man's happiness is only in subordination to this, as to his sovereign wisdom seems meet.

Let. VII. contains clear, abundant, and decisive evidence of this great truth from the holy Scriptures.

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Let. VIII. shows, that the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ unto death is the true cause of all that happiness which the sons of God find in keeping his commandments; and therefore Mr. Smith's doctrine, that this happiness is caused by their obedience, as the eating of wholesome food is the cause of pleasure, and of happy effects on our constitution, is dangerous, and tends to undermine the gospel.

Let. IX. shews, that as God never gave laws to men, of the nature which Mr. S. teaches, it is impossible they could be broken; and consequently impossible that Jesus Christ could make any atonement for the transgression of them.

Let. X. states the true nature of the atonement of Christ, and evidence of it from the word of God.

Let. XI. shews the impiety of teaching, that, in the penalty of all mankind being made sinners, and subjected to death by the disobedience of the first man, we are directed chiefly to behold the marvellous goodness of God.

Let. XII. contains evidence, from Scripture and from fact, that Mr. S.'s doctrine is false, namely, that it is not difficult to persuade men to seek justification by the righteousness of Christ. It is also shewn, that he hath made a very gross misapplication of Titus iii. 8. to prove another unscriptural doctrine, namely, that the preacher ought chiefly to dwell on inducing men to follow Christ's example.

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Let. XIII. shews, that though it is the intention of Christ to have all his followers conformed to himself in holiness, yet it is the preaching of the gospel that he hath appointed for promoting this conformity, as it furnishes the constraining motives, and secures the great efficient, the Holy Spirit. Mr. S.'s finding fault with opposing the gospel to the law, and his assigning the defence of hearing nothing other than the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, as the cause of men being filled with spiritual pride, and many other sins, are also considered, and shewn to be groundless.

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For XIII. There is a choice in the selection of  
of things to have all his followers conform to  
in all in holiness, yet it is the preaching of  
the gospel that he hath appointed for promul-  
gating the reformation, as it furnishes the con-  
firming of grace, and therefore the great con-  
firms the Holy Spirit. Mr. S. James will  
withholding the gospel to the law, and his  
aligning the delinquency of being nothing other  
than the perfect doctrine of Christianity, as  
the cause of men being filled with various  
guile, and many other things are illustrated,  
and shown to be grounded.

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## LETTER I.

*Rev. dear Brethren and Fellow Christians,*

**I**T is with great concern that I find myself called upon to take up my pen to oppose Mr. James Smith, late minister of the Relief congregation at Dunfermline, in the principles which he hath thought proper to publish to the world. I ordained him to the holy ministry. Often he hath called me father, and I have felt, and still feel, the tender tie; but I am bound to sacrifice the feelings of a father to my duty as a minister of the gospel.

I have sometimes read, with admiration, the exalted character which Moses gives of the tribe of Levi; and I have felt an ambition to form a part of my conduct in the ministry upon it. Of these venerable ministers of God's sanctuary we are told, Deut. xxxiii, that "they said unto their father and their mother, I have not seen him: neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children."

Aaron had made a calf of gold, and Israel had worshipped it. At the command of God Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "who is on the Lord's side; let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him; and he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, put every man his sword by

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his side; and go in and out, from gate to gate, throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour."

— Trying commands to the human heart! Yet the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; "And there fell of the people, that day, about three thousand men." Natural affection and social endearments were all sacrificed to their duty to God. Our warmest gratitude is due to him; because he doth not, in these days of his gracious government, require of the ministers of the gospel this severe test of their fidelity. "Put up thy sword," said the King of kings to his apostle Peter; "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight; but *now* is my kingdom not from hence." Nevertheless, *now*, as well as then, God commands us to know no man after the flesh. If we would prove ourselves his holy ones, with whom is his Thummim and Urim, we must say, even to our sons whom we have ordained, "We know them not." We must *now* gird on our sword; but it must be the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With this weapon of righteousness dipped in the oil of love to God, and to my erring son, I desire to enter the field of controversy. It is thorny, as it is long since Mr. Smith gave a challenge to the Calvinists. In tenderness to him, I have declined it, hoping that, by the gentle means which have been tried, he might be recovered from the error of his way. These have been used, alas! in vain. I accept of his challenge now, not properly to oppose him; I wish him all happiness; but to oppose many principles which he hath advanced.

vanced in his publications contrary to the holy Scriptures.

His Carnal Man's Character hath made the greatest noise, and given the greatest alarm to the Christians under the inspection of the Relief presbytery of Dysart; but his performance on the Nature, Necessity, and Design, of the Sufferings of Christ, is filled with the most deadly poison, as it contains doctrines contrary to the true nature of God; to his holy law, in the nature and design of it; and to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I propose at present to confine my observations chiefly to the contents of this publication. If the Christians who find themselves interested in the subjects, think proper to give encouragement to the following letters, it may be an inducement to consider the Carnal Man's Character and Supplement afterward. I begin, in my next, by stating our author's doctrine on the justice of God.

I am your humble servant,

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER II.

*Dear Brethren, &c.*

OUR author, in writing against the Calvinistic view of the justice of God's nature respecting the punishment of sin, expresses himself in the following manner, p. 29, 30. "When God's justice is represented as relentless, inflexible, and vindictive,

“ extorting from the Surety the whole debt which  
 “ the sons of men had contracted, before he would  
 “ consent to forgive the guilty, we then lose  
 “ sight of every other perfection, and the chief  
 “ design of punishment. Thus we see that the  
 “ observation of a learned author, Dr. M’Gill,  
 “ though just, as it respects the misrepresenta-  
 “ tions of men, hath no foundation in the doc-  
 “ trine itself.” “ Many represent the Father  
 “ acting according to the rules of a rigorous and  
 “ inflexible justice, or rather an implacable ven-  
 “ geance; as one who would never have had com-  
 “ passion on the guilty, unless it had been reluc-  
 “ tantly extorted by a third party; and who ne-  
 “ ver would have shewn the least favour, without  
 “ the payment of a full equivalent.” This last  
 sentence is our author’s quotation from Dr. M’Gill  
 on Christ’s sufferings. Again, in p. 52, 53, Mr.  
 S. says, “ The advocates for Christ’s atonement  
 “ have injured the cause they meant to support,  
 “ by producing inconclusive arguments as the  
 “ chief proof. To serve a purpose in our sys-  
 “ tems, divines are pleased to say, that there is  
 “ a justice essential to God, which they call in-  
 “ flexible, rigorous, and vindictive. This sup-  
 “ posed attribute is placed in direct opposition to  
 “ mercy and love. Hence some have described  
 “ sad strife and contention among the Divine  
 “ perfections. They do not consider that there  
 “ are no contrary principles in Deity, and that  
 “ mercy and love are more amiable and benefi-  
 “ cial to us, that their operations are guided  
 “ by wisdom and justice. Whatever is said of  
 “ justice must be considered as said of God acting  
 “ justly; and if God’s justice be, what many  
 “ Christians say, then our God is inflexible, ri-  
 “ gorous,



“gorous and vindictive; the very reverse of what is said in the Scriptures.”

From these passages it appears that Dr. McGill and our author apply the word, extorting to two cases perfectly opposite, the Doctor, to Christ's extorting compassion from his Father, and our author to the Father extorting from Christ the whole debt. But Mr Smith knows this word is not used in our systems. It is insidiously made use of by the opponents of the Calvinist doctrine, to mark it with a brand of infamy. And it hath no appearance of candour in an author to represent the doctrine of our systems in words which convey ideas inconsistent with that doctrine. I am sorry to find Mr. Smith guilty here. Extortion is, itself, an act of injustice, and therefore it is impossible either that Christ could extort compassion from his Father, or that the Father could extort the whole debt from Christ, in order to forgiveness. The word in our systems, as applied to the satisfaction required by the Father, is, exacted, or some other of like signification. But it is not to the use of an improper word, that our author's argument stands opposed: It is, to the Father exacting the payment of the whole debt by Jesus Christ. In p. 29, he says, the view which he gives of the sufferings of Christ, “shews us the impriety of maintaining, that *all* the punishment which many millions had incurred, was inflicted upon him; such a punishment would neither have been an illustration of the penalty, nor any proper emblem of what individuals had to expect.” From these quotations, taken from our author, it appears manifest to me, that he considers the nature of the divine justice, as described in our systems to be, that in God, which bound

bound him to exact from the surety the whole debt, which many millions had contracted, before he would consent to forgive the guilty—That he denies this to be the truth—that in his judgment it is incompatible with every other perfection of God; and the very reverse of what the scripture teaches—that he agrees with, and defends Dr. McGill on this subject—and that the chief design of punishment had something else in view than to satisfy this justice.

Francis Turretine, that able and learned champion for Calvinism tells us, “ that the constant doctrine of the orthodox is, that Christ *truly* and *perfectly* satisfied the divine justice for *all* our sins, and that his doing so was of such absolute necessity, that without it we could have no hope, either of the remission of sins, or of salvation and eternal life.” He adds, “ this doctrine the Papists deny in an indirect manner—the Arminians artfully undermine it—but the Socinians openly and keenly oppose it, p. 6. concerning the necessity of the sufferings of Christ. It is painful to find, that this author hath deserted the standard of divine truth, and ranked himself with Socinus in denying a justice of this nature as belonging to God. And it is painful to find, that when he feared an investigation of his principles by the friends of truth, instead of a manly defence or a penitent recantation, he basely sheltered himself under a flagrant untruth, by telling his readers, p. 24, of his letters; “ That to the utmost of his power he guarded against contradicting our standards; and in the subjects which he published, saw no reason to depart from the opinions of our fathers as to doctrines.” It is impossible for me to believe these assertions, because in his essay, on  
confessing

confessing the truth, published in the year 1788, he inveighs with much severity against the popular systems composed by our fathers in times of ignorance, and against those who support them. He gives us also to understand, that he has digged a pearl out of the holy Scriptures, which has long been buried under the errors and traditions of his fathers. It is to be lamented, that though Mr S. agrees with Socinus in this, that there is no justice in God, that required from Jesus Christ the whole debt which many millions had incurred, yet he goes far beyond Socinus in another error, immediately connected with this subject; or I should rather say Socinus appears to be orthodox, but Mr Smith erroneous, to a great degree. Though Socinus denied that there is any justice in God requiring full satisfaction for sin, yet he admitted, that our sins deserved, according to justice, to be punished; only, he contended, that God both could and did pass from punishing, according to what sin deserved. I affirm, said that author, in his book *De Salvatore*, "That Jesus Christ neither satisfied divine justice, according to which we deserved to be condemned for our sins, nor was there any need that he should do so." Here it is admitted by Socinus, that our sins deserved, according to justice, to be punished. And I doubt not but he believed that sin consisted in transgressing the commands of God. But Mr. S. has gone the length of teaching, that God's commands do not bind to obedience apart from an arbitrary penalty, flowing from God's law, p. 45. devised by God's wisdom, p. 29. and annexed to the command, for the sole purpose of establishing his authority and enforcing obedience, p. 20, and by consequence, that there is no sin in trans-



transgressing them, apart from this penalty. A few sentences will make this clear. "Two things, he says, p. 19. are necessary to constitute a law: First, That it be enacted by one, possessed of legislative authority: Secondly, That the command be enforced with a proper sanction." Now, if the sanction is necessary to give the command the force of a law, then the command is not law without that sanction; and if it is not law, it doth not bind to obedience; and if it doth not bind to obedience, then we cannot commit sin, by acting contrary to it; for where there is no law, there can be no transgression; and if there be no transgression, there can be no desert of punishment; and if no desert, no justice in punishing. And thus it comes out at last, that whereas Socinus admits our sins deserve punishment according to justice, Mr S. denies that the transgression of the mere command is sin, and consequently cannot in justice be punished. Thus he stabs the doctrine of our Lord's atonement in the heart, and with hands embrued in his blood, he gives us, in its place, a mock atonement. He uses, indeed, the words atonement, propitiation, and the like; but either he uses them in a sense contrary to his true scheme, when he is off his guard, or he affixes ideas to them, diametrically opposite to their meaning in the word of God, as we shall have occasion to shew in its proper place.

I am, your's, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER III.

*Rev. and dear Brethren, &c.*

OUR author calls vindictive justice a *supposed attribute*, and he says it is placed in direct opposition to mercy and love. But it is to be observed, that it is not Calvinists, but Socinians and their abettors, who place it in direct opposition to mercy and love. Indeed they place it so directly opposite to mercy and love, that they deny they can exist together in the divine mind; and therefore they deny that it is any part of God's nature. But though some Calvinist divines, to accommodate themselves to common understandings, state the claims which justice and faithfulness and mercy might be supposed to make apart each from the other; yet this is done in order to shew how perfectly, upon their scheme, they harmonize in the atonement made by the Son of God. The guilt, therefore, of placing them in opposition, belongs to Mr S. and his friend. We stand acquitted of the charge. That vindictive justice really belongs to the divine nature, I proceed to prove, from two great sources of evidence, reason, and revelation. I begin with a principle of intuitive evidence, at least it appears so to me. An intelligent being ought to regard intelligent being according to the kind and degree of natural and moral perfection of which intelligent being is possessed. If, therefore, there is an intelligent being, who possesses so much natural and moral perfection, that

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in comparison of him all other perfection is as nothing; that being ought to regard himself infinitely more than all other perfection put together. This, in my view, is unerring rectitude. But Jehovah is that Being. And he assures us himself that he is. "The nations are as the drops of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." Is. xl. 15. 17.

If, therefore, God did not regard himself infinitely more than all his universe taken together, he would not do what is right and fit to be done. If he regarded his universe more than himself, he would prefer so many grasshoppers, so many drops of a bucket, so many dusts on a balance, to infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being and perfection. But this is impossible for him to do. This would be an immoral act. It would be doing what he forbids his intelligent creatures to do. It would be exalting the creature, by his own act, above the infinitely perfect Creator.

Again, if God's infinite perfection entitle him to the infinite esteem and love of himself, it must entitle him to the supreme esteem and love of his intelligent creatures. And if he is entitled to it from the perfection of his nature, he cannot but require it from the perfection of his will; and so he doth. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." This is the first and great commandment. Now, if it be right that God should be supremely esteemed and loved and obeyed, then it must be wrong not to esteem, and love, and obey him. If the great commandment is to love and serve God, the great transgression must be

not



not to love nor serve God. It is doing wrong to infinite perfection. It is not able, indeed, to impair the being, perfections, or blessedness of God; but this doth not arise from its hateful nature and tendency, but from the independent perfection of God; just as it is not owing to the nature of a little passion that it doth not kill a man, but to the strength of his constitution, which overcomes it. If then it is wrong, wrong of the very worst kind, God cannot but disapprove of it. It cannot but be displeasing to him, to find that his infinite glories are hated and contemned by his creatures, and sinful desire preferred to him. And if he cannot but be displeased, he cannot but manifest that displeasure in suitable acts, seeing he cannot act any otherwise than in an agreeableness to his nature.

But the proper acts in which God manifests his displeasure against sin must be in acts of punishment, for these are the proper acts that manifest the infinite contrariety of his nature to sin. This is the vindictive justice of God. And for the same reason, that he must manifest his displeasure against sin, he must do it to the uttermost, that every kind and every degree of sin deserves, because it is his nature that leads him to punish, and that nature must punish one sin as well as another, and this is the rigour of his justice; it cannot dispense with kind or degree of transgression; and it must be inflexible, because his nature is always the same. Thus it appears, that the justice which belongs to the nature of God, is that perfection in him, by which he is necessarily led to treat intelligent beings, according to their nature, their qualities, and their actions. It leads him to conduct himself toward himself, according to what he

knows himself to be, and to conduct himself towards his intelligent offspring, according to what he knows them to be. It is the guardian of deity; first, because he is all, and his creatures as nothing before him, and necessarily maintains and vindicates his rights against all invaders. This argument will derive invincible force from what I shall lay before you in my next, from the holy scriptures.

I am your's, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

#### LETTER IV.

*Dear Brethren and Fellow Christians.*

**I**N denying the received doctrine among Calvinists, contained in our explanatory standards of the holy Scriptures, Mr S. has thought proper to assert, that whatever is said of God's justice must be considered as said of God *acting justly*. The magnitude of this error is not seen at first by common Christians, because they are not aware of that to which our author opposes it, nor of the unscriptural scheme of doctrine which it is intended to support. This assertion of his is made to overturn our doctrine, which we believe to be taught in the holy Scriptures, *that there is a justice in God's nature*, which *necessarily* leads him to punish sin; and that his doing so does not depend upon an *arbitrary appointment*. And it is intended in support

port of this unscriptural proposition, that the justice of God that is concerned in the punishment of sin, is consequent upon an *arbitrary appointment* of wisdom springing from *love*, fixing upon a penalty, for the purpose of establishing God's authority, and enforcing obedience for man's happiness. The evil of this error then consists in its direct contrariety to the testimony of the holy Spirit, who asserts, that God is just in his nature, as well as in his actions. It is a denial of that to be truth, which cannot possibly but be truth; and it is done to support a chimerical system of divine government, which is infinitely unworthy of God, and cannot possibly have existence, as long as God continues to be unchangeable. One would think a little reflexion would lead a man of plain sense to conclude, that the acts of the divine Being must proceed from his nature. And whoever looks into the holy Scriptures with care, must find that Jehovah is said to be righteous in his nature, as well as in his acts. And if so, then I am guilty of giving God himself the lie; if I say whatever is said of his justice, must be considered as said of him acting justly. I might with as much propriety say, whatever is spoken of God's wisdom, must be considered as spoken of God acting wisely, as say, whatever is said of his justice, must be considered as said of God acting justly. God's infinitely holy nature cannot possibly be indifferent to sin, or to the punishment of it, till once a penalty, springing from love, and devised by wisdom, be fixed upon as the punishment; as God is infinitely perfect, enmity against him must be an infinite evil, and must deserve an infinite punishment. The demerit of sin, therefore, can have no dependence on arbitrary



trary appointment, making it an evil, deserving more or less punishment, just as wisdom thinks proper. God is as necessarily just as he is necessarily wise. In Deut. xxxii. 3, 4. Moses informs us, "that God is a God of truth, and without iniquity, *just* and right is he." I am as much warranted from these words, to believe that there is a justice which belongs to the nature of God; antecedent to his acts, as I am warranted to believe, there is a veracity and a holiness which belong to his nature, antecedent to the truth of his information, and the purity of his acts. And from this justice he is led to repay sin. He assures us himself, he will in no wise acquit the guilty: That is, even where he forgives iniquity, transgression and sin, he will not do it without punishing, on account of it. Yet this punishment ought not to be represented as the effect of an implacable vengeance. This is a sort of fury which cannot possibly be in God. Implacable vengeance, as I conceive of it, is a furious impulse, heated in the moments of apprehended injury, and rolls impetuously over reason, justice, interest, and every other consideration, to overwhelm its object in destruction, or settles in the breast, until a proper opportunity offer itself; when, like a savage, it gluts itself with the blood of him who did the wrong, though at the risk of its own ruin. Vindictive justice takes no pleasure in the misery of its object. Yet it cannot but punish, because that is an act of justice, even though it make miserable for ever. Its omniscient eye sees that the punishment is deserved by the demerit of transgression. A righteous earthly judge cannot but pronounce sentence of death on a murderer as just, though he takes no pleasure in the death of the man. His conscience  
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tells him the crime deserves it. Why then should men attempt to blacken that glorious perfection of God, which necessarily leads him to distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, with the odious epithets of revenge, passion, implacable vengeance, and the like? If we saw divine things as the saints do in heaven, we would doubtless be convinced, that there is an infinitely greater fitness in punishing what is committed against God, than in shedding the blood of him by whom man's blood hath been shed. God calls the punishment of a sin a repaying of a thing, and that ought to be done; and repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them; "He will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face." Deut. vii. 10.

Mr. Smith quotes a passage, in which God says, "Fury is not in me," to prove, that passion and revenge do not belong to the nature of God, as these are in mortal men. If, by vindictive justice, Calvinists meant the same thing in God as these are in men, there would have been some propriety in his observation; but there is no more force in these words, "Fury is not in me," to prove that there is no passion in God, than there is in these words, "God is furious," to prove that there is. It must be from some other considerations that our conclusions must be drawn, otherwise we must make the holy Scriptures an heap of contradictions. When God says, "Fury is not in me, he intends the expression toward his vineyard of red wine, that is, his church, against which he hath no vindictive justice, that being appeased by what their Surety hath suffered. But, in the Old Testament, fury is said to be in God against his enemies about  
sixty

sixty times. This must mean something. It cannot mean implacable vengeance, or boiling passion. But, as fury is passion in the height of its rage, boiling over the boundaries of reason and religion, and satisfied with nothing but gratification; and seeing God is infinitely free of all perturbation of heart, I think fury, as he applies it to himself, must mean, that the punishment of sin is as necessary an effect of the infinite purity of his nature, as the gratification of fury is necessarily sought after by that rage of the heart. In full concord with this doctrine, it is to be observed, that there is not a single instance known to us where man or angel hath sinned, but punishment certainly follows. The prophet Nahum tells us the reason, agreeable to what I have advanced; Nahum i. 2. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth. The Lord revengeth, and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power; and will not at all acquit the wicked. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and the earth is burned at his presence; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

How is it possible to read words of such tremendous import, from the pen of inspiration, and not believe that there is a justice in the nature of God which leads him to punish sin to the uttermost of its deserts. We have heard God's prophet on this subject, let us hear God himself. "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest  
lowest



lowest hell; and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them. I will spend mine arrows upon them. For I lift mine hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh." Deut. xxxii. 22, 23.

When I read these, and many similar passages of the holy Scriptures, I find myself constrained to believe, that God intends to inform—that there are unalienable rights which belong to him—that he is jealous of them—and can no more cease to maintain them than he can cease to be—that he abhors those who hate him, and are enemies to him—and must, from the perfection of his nature, punish them; either in their own person, or in the person of their Surety. And therefore I find it impossible for me to believe with Mr. S. that there is not a justice in the nature of God requiring the payment of the whole debt. Because he is the righteous Lord in his nature, he must exercise righteousness in his government. Because he is just in his nature, his throne of grace hath that justice for its base. Justice and judgment, that is, justice in the exact punishment of sin, is the foundation of God's throne, Pf. lxxxix. 14.; just as the ark, which contained the rights of God, was the basis of the mercy-seat.

Seeing these things are so, I cannot but grieve when I find Christ's professed ministers attempting

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To

To maim Heav'n's perfection,  
 Break its equal beams,  
 And, by opprobrious praise,  
 Undeify even God himself.

In my next, I shall consider our author's erroneous view of God's law.

I am yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER V.

*Rev. and dear Brethren, &c.*

LET us now hear the account which Mr. S. gives of the two things which are necessary to constitute a law of God. In p. 19, he says, "Two things are necessary to constitute a law; first, that it be enacted by one possessed of legislative authority; and, 2dly, that the command be enforced with a proper sanction." To the first of these assertions, no just objection can be made. The last appears to me impious; because it is highly dishonourable to the supreme Lawgiver, and to his law. Let us examine the commands of God a little, as men are now concerned in the observance of them. They are of two kinds; those which arise necessarily from his perfect nature, and those which spring from the good pleasure of his will. The first kind have a respect to us as rational creatures; the second as  
 sinful

sinful and miserable men, in order to our deliverance, and recovery to God.

Now, with respect to the first kind, I appeal to the understanding of every good man, whether he doth not see such infinite natural and moral perfection in the ever-blessed God, as entitles him to the supreme esteem, delight, good-will, obedience, and submission of every intelligent being, independent of any arbitrary penalty devised by Divine wisdom? And I appeal to every enlightened Christian, whether he hath not an intuitive perception, that there must be such an exceeding sinfulness in hating this glorious Being, and in opposing his government, as deserves, in the strictest justice, to be punished on its own account? And with respect to natural affection, benevolence, integrity, veracity, justice, fidelity, chastity, and other virtues, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, if they do not see an innate excellency that renders them obligatory, apart from any arbitrary regulations of wisdom. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 32, "that the heathens, who had broken the moral laws of God, knew that they were worthy of death." This was not from any knowledge they had of an arbitrary penalty springing from the love of God, but from the decision of conscience concerning the innate evil of their crimes. For the same reason, even the barbarians who are mentioned by the apostle, decided, that "vengeance would not suffer a murderer to live."

As to the commands which spring from the love of God, it is to be observed, this will is the result of infinite knowledge, and love, and wisdom, for accomplishing the noblest of purposes, the recovery of a part of mankind from sin and



misery to the love, and service, and enjoyment of God for ever.

This will of God, therefore, being perfect in itself, and the will of the Sovereign of the universe, and having such infinitely excellent designs in view, must bind to obedience on these grounds. No doubt, it is sin to disregard the penalty; but it is not an arbitrary penalty: it is a penalty that is deserved. And the sin, even here, when traced to its true principle, consists of contempt of God, who informs, that the damnation of men is just, Rom. iii. 8. Let us attend to another train of evidence.

When God gave the ten commandments on Mount Sinai, were they not laws that bound to obedience, till once an arbitrary penalty was annexed? Who dare say so? Mr. S. ought to lie low before the great Majesty of heaven and of earth, for writing in so degrading a manner of him. I pray God to forgive him. Even the deserved penalty was not declared at that time, except with respect to the transgression of two of these laws. Moses tells us, Deut. v. 32, that when God gave them to all the assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, he added *no more*. Did the rest not bind? Yes. Jehovah prefaced them with the unchangeable grounds of obedience; "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." These are the sacred words which bind. Therefore our valuable Shorter Catechism teaches, that because God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer, we are bound to keep all his commandments. Our author's doctrine, therefore, that God's commands are not laws binding to obedience, apart from an arbitrary penalty, is poison of a deadly nature,

nature, tending to give men despicable views of God, and of his laws, and naturally leading to commit every kind of transgression with greediness; because, if men can be brought to believe that God's commands have no innate excellency that binds to the keeping of them, they can easily, I think, be brought to believe, that it is impossible God, from his love, should annex the penalty of eternal damnation to the transgression of them, though Mr. S. should teach otherwise. This doctrine, therefore, goes to the plucking up of morality among men, as well as of Christianity, by the very roots. If any embrace it, Christians need not wonder, though in the righteous judgment of God, they should be left to be guilty of mental reservation, hypocrisy, dissimulation, lying, deceit, and any crime that promotes a present interest. And honest men can have no security against them, but in the particular providence of God. I cannot think Mr. S. saw these pernicious consequences of his doctrine.

I have certainly written much more than enough to make it evident, that the obligation to obey the commands of God is not founded on any penalty springing from the law of God, either in whole or in part, as this author teaches; but in the infinite perfection of God himself, and in those glorious relations in which he hath been graciously pleased to place himself to men. Yet I find myself strongly inclined to add a few other sentiments on the subject. If the obligation to obey the commands of God were founded on any arbitrary penalty, or even in the tremendous curse of the law itself, then it would certainly follow, that wherever God freed men from the penalty,

penalty, he freed them from the obligation to obedience. But all believers in Christ are freed from the penalty, both on earth and in heaven. Paul tells us, true saints on earth have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. John assures us, that perfect love casteth out fear. This cannot mean fear consisting in reverence for the awful perfections of God, because divine love strengthens this. It must therefore mean the fear of the penalty. From this penalty, Paul assures us, genuine believers in Christ are freed. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" Rom. viii. 1. Now, what horrid blasphemy would it be against God, to say, that by freeing saints on earth and in heaven from the penalty of his law, he thereby freed them from all obligation for ever to love and obey him. Such consequences as these should put every believer in Jesus, every lover of God and of his pure commandments, on his guard against embracing a system in which they are virtually contained, however confidently the author may assert, that it is a pearl digged out of the holy Scriptures. It is truly distressing to find an author, who affects so great a superiority of talent and knowledge of the Scriptures above his brethren, publishing sentiments to the world so contrary to the infinite excellency of God, his holy word, and sound philosophy. They are also completely subversive of the atonement of Christ, and our explanatory standards on that subject. O that it would please God to prevent him from denying the Lord that bought him! lest he bring upon himself and others swift destruction.

I am your's, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

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## LETTER VI.

*Rev. and dear Brethren, &c.*

I PROCEED now to state our author's erroneous view of the design of God in the giving of his laws to men. In p. 19, 20, he says, "God exerciseth his authority over men, not merely to make a display of his power and dominion, but to promote the welfare of his subjects. A wise and affectionate parent, possessed of unlimited authority, will not exercise it in oppressing his offspring. He endeavours to exercise it for the purpose of making them happy. In this very light we ought to contemplate the operations of God's authority, in enacting the laws which he hath given us." This, in my view, is a very unscriptural account of the design of God in the giving of his law.

It seems to me, that by the expression, "not merely to make a display of his power and dominion, but to promote the welfare of his subjects," one of two things must be intended, either that a display of power and dominion was one end of God in the exercise of his authority, and the happiness of his subjects another; and so we have two ends, or that God exerciseth his power and dominion for the purpose of making his subjects happy; and thus we have one end, and the mean of accomplishing that end. If two ends are intended, our author is certainly mistaken

ken as to the first; because it is impossible that an infinitely wise Being can exercise his authority merely for the purpose of making a display of power and dominion. The exercise of power and dominion are not final causes; they are means of accomplishing ends. Even wise men do not exercise their power but for some valuable end. Therefore I think it fair to understand our author as intending to say, that as wise parents exercise their authority for the purpose of making their offspring happy, in this very light we ought to view the operations of God, in the enacting of those laws which he hath given to us. Had this author, in any other part of this publication, given us any account of God having any higher end in view than the welfare of his subjects in the enactment of his laws, I would have understood him here to mean, that God intended the welfare of his subjects as a subordinate end, notwithstanding of his mode of expression. But this is so far from being the case, that he is at pains to confine our views only to this, and to the way in which those laws attain this end, namely, by our obedience to them. P. 20, "Not that God  
 " can in the least be profited by the most perfect  
 " obedience possible, or that, in any degree, the  
 " keeping of this law can entitle man to a re-  
 " ward; but as the eating of wholesome food is  
 " rewarded by the pleasure it gives us, and its  
 " happy effects on our constitution, so the obser-  
 " vation of these excellent precepts is amply re-  
 " warded in the pleasure and real profit which  
 " this yields to the willing mind."

Thus I think it is clear, that our author considers man's happiness by obedience to God's commands enforced by a penalty devised by wisdom,

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as the ultimate end which he had in view in enacting them. Here, then, God having a supreme view to his own glory in the giving of his law, is wholly excluded; as though, because our obedience cannot possibly profit him, therefore he could not possibly have himself supremely in view in any other respect.

The doctrine of our explanatory standards, and of all the reformed churches, is, that God, for his own glory, hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; consequently, according to them, this was his supreme end in the giving of his law, as one of those things which God hath fore-ordained. Here we are told by this author, God's design, in the giving of his law, was the happiness of his subjects.

We have showed there are no laws of God of the nature which Mr. S. has taught; and therefore I am not now to reason against an imaginary design in giving imaginary laws: but we shall suppose, for the sake of argument, that Mr. S. intended the true laws of God contained in the holy Scriptures, as stated by God himself, and that God's end in giving them was, that, by obeying them, his subjects might be happy.

It appears, that the doctrine of God acting with a supreme view to his own glory, is a polar truth of the holy Scriptures, and agreeable to the dictates of the human understanding in its most improved state. It is the pretended improvements of philosophy which combat this doctrine; and, alas! it hath many secret and open enemies among proud philosophers and inconsiderate divines. Because "the carnal mind is enmity against God, it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." Their argument is

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of the following purport ; God is infinitely perfect in himself, and independent of all his creatures. Since this is so, he cannot possibly have any interests of his own to serve in his designs or acts, without himself, seeing none of them can enlarge his being, encrease his perfections, or heighten his blessedness ; therefore his ultimate end in his works must be, the happiness of his creatures. They add, We condemn a man who acts from a selfish disposition, and we approve of disinterested conduct. The principle within us, that pronounces judgment in this manner, we have from the Author of our nature ; and therefore we ought not to believe that he acts from a principle himself, which we are formed by our nature to condemn. There must be a defect somewhere in this reasoning ; let us try to discover where it lies.

It is certain that God is infinitely perfect in himself ; and therefore it is impossible that he can act with the view of making any addition to his being, perfection, or blessedness. But doth it therefore follow, that there is no other possible sense in which he can make himself his end ? No, certainly. On the contrary, for this very reason, that he is all-perfect, he must make himself his supreme end in all that he doth. That omniscient Eye, which sees that the created universe is as nothing compared to him, pronounces, that it is unchangeably fit he regard himself infinitely before this nothing.

Before God created the world, there was nothing but himself, the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. He saw, then, that his own infinite glories were entitled to his supreme regard, and he regarded them accordingly. He

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was first, he was all to himself from eternity. This was infinite fitness. When, therefore, he designed and created the universe, this first respect to himself behoved to continue the same, because he is unchangeable. Thus it appears, that the defect of the philosophers' argument lies in the inference which is drawn from the perfection of God. For though, because God is infinitely perfect, he cannot act to make any addition to himself; yet, because he respected himself supremely from everlasting, and is unchangeable, he must, in all the designs and acts of his wisdom, goodness, and power without himself, have this same respect to himself; and all created happiness must be subordinate to this, as to his wisdom shall seem meet.

As to the other part of the argument, it is specious, but not solid. It is true, there is a principle in our nature which approves of disinterested conduct; but it is not true, that there is a principle in our nature that condemns every kind and every degree of selfishness. The Author of our nature has made the love we owe to ourselves the standard of our love to others. This could not possibly be, if every kind of selfishness was criminal. The fact is, we pronounce, without hesitation, that man a fool, an idiot, or a madman, who is lost to all sense of self-interest. Who doth not behold, with admiration, a nation calmly, yet firmly, declaring and asserting what belongs to them as individuals. It is the selfish despot that basely invades the rights of men, and sacrifices the labours, the property, and the happiness of individuals to his will and pleasures, that we condemn.

Shall we admit, then, what cannot be denied, that individuals have rights which are unscriptable; which it is honourable to maintain; and which all governments on earth ought to have in view, to recover or to secure to the individuals who compose their subjects: and shall we deny that God hath rights of his own which it is infinitely just that he should maintain? Here is no mean, no criminal selfishness; no sacrificing of a greater to a lesser good; but a communication of happiness to countless myriads of creatures of different kinds; notwithstanding the highest provocation from millions of them, yet still subordinate to God's supreme respect to his own infinite perfection. This appears to be unchangeable fitness, unerring rectitude, moral beauty. Call it what you please. This is honour to whom honour is due. And God cannot be the less bound to it, that he is himself the Being who possesses all this glory. Supreme perfection ought to have a first respect to supreme perfection. This is the moral rectitude of God's nature, and therefore it must be the moral rectitude of his will in all his designs, and in all his acts.

Besides, there is a consequence of a gross immoral nature, which follows from the doctrine of God giving man a law for his own happiness without any supreme regard to himself. It is this, that the more a man had a regard to God in the keeping of his commandments, the more he would be guilty of breaking them.

If God's design, in giving the law, is the happiness of men, without a supreme respect to himself, then, if a man observe the law from a supreme love to God, he observes it from a principle



ciple that, by the supposition, makes no part of the law ; and, if I perform an act from a principle that makes no part of the law, I fail in what is most essential in obedience, namely, a proper principle of obedience ; and I transgress in that which is most essential in transgression, namely, a wrong principle of action. May it please God to give Mr. S. and every one of us, more exalted conceptions of himself as the *I AM*, and more humbling views of our own nothingness before him !

I am, your's, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER VII.

*Dear Brethren, &c.*

THE human mind hath made great discoveries in the works of God which fall under its observation, and learned to apply the laws of nature to useful purposes in human life. But with respect to the knowledge of God himself, it is not a guide to be depended upon. Though God is not far from any of us, for in him we live, and move, and have our being ; yet men, unaided by revelation, at best only grope in the dark, if haply they may feel after God, and find him. But the fact, proved by experience, and the testimony of God himself, is, "that the world by wisdom knew not God ;" 1 Cor. i. 21. To the unerring light of revelation, therefore, we ought to

to betake ourselves for information on this great point, "*What is the supreme end of God in all his works.*" In these sacred records, we have very particular information on this subject. In Rom. xi. 36, the apostle Paul informs us, that "of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." Solomon tells us, that "God hath made all things for himself;" Prov. xvi. 4. Redemption, the most excellent of all God's works with which we are acquainted, is declared, in all the parts of it, to be for the glory of God. Thus, "being chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy, and without blame before him in love;" and "predestination to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself," are declared to be "to the praise of the glory of his grace;" Eph. i. 4—6. The angels inform us, that, in the greatest expression of God's good-will to men in the gift of his Son, he did not forget himself; "Glory to God in the highest." This stood first; "and on earth peace, good-will toward men;" Luke ii. 14. The faithful Witness informs us, that he "sought not his own glory, but the glory of him that sent him;" John vii. 18. This was his highest end in all that he became, in all that he did, and in all that he suffered. "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;" John xvii. 4. This was the end he prayed his Father to accomplish, and this was the end which his Father told him he both had and would again accomplish. "Father, glorify thy name." "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again;" John xii. 28. The end which Christ had in view to accomplish by his death was, that those who are saved by it

it, "might not live *unto themselves*, but *to him* who died for them;" 2 Cor. v. 15. (This, by the way, is a certain evidence that he is the true God; otherwise it would be constant idolatry to live to him.) In another place, the apostle tells us, that true Christians are not their own, they are bought with a price; and "therefore they are to *glorify God* with their bodies and with their spirits, which are God's;" 1 Cor. vi. 20. In heaven, the redeemed are so fully satisfied with God being exalted above all, that this is the ground of their grateful song to the Lamb; "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us *unto God* by thy blood."

In full agreement with all that I have quoted from the holy Scriptures, of God's design, and the design of Jesus Christ, in the work of redemption, we are told, that when God creates his spiritual children, it is for his glory; "For I have created him *for my glory*;" Isa. xliii. 7. All their holy dispositions, and the exercises of these dispositions, and the fruits of these exercises, have the same noble end in view. "Abraham was strong in faith, giving *glory to God*;" Rom. iv. 20. The divine love of saints manifested in sending relief to other poor saints, was *to the glory of the same Lord*;" 2 Cor. viii. 19. God says of holy praise, that "who so offereth it *glorifieth him*;" Ps. l. 23. Paul tells us, that the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, is "*to the glory of God the Father*;" Phil. ii. 11. And our great Prophet sent from God informs us, that the highest end of all the holy fruit of the obedience of the saints,



faints, is the glory of his Father: "Herein is my Father *glorified*, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples;" John xv. 8. The first and great commandment which he gives to men, is a supreme regard to God: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the *first* and *great commandment*. The first end which he commands his disciples to have in view in all their prayers, is the glory of God: "Hallowed be thy name." And the motives which he authorises them to urge in their prayers have all an exclusive respect to God: "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

When God led his people through the wilderness, among other things which he did for them, he gave them his law. He had subordinate ends in doing this, and one that was supreme. What was it? "He led him about. *He instructed him.* He kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him, to make unto himself an everlasting name;" Deut. xxxii. 10—12. Isa. lxiii. 12, 14, compared. False philosophy would have it, that God's glory is subordinate to the happiness of the creatures; but the God of all knowledge assures us, that he intends the highest happiness of the most favoured part of his creation as the means of promoting his glory: "The Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous. They shall inherit the land for ever,

ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, *that I may be glorified;*" II. lx. 20, 21.

I have one thing more to add; it is this. Certainly it is reasonable to believe, that the highest end which is attained by obedience to the law, is the highest end which God had in view in the giving of the law: but that is his own glory; "That God in all things may be *glorified*, through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." I Pet. iv. 11. These, and multitudes of other passages of the holy Scriptures, make it manifest, that though the welfare of God's subjects cannot but be agreeable to his nature, considered in itself; for God is love: yet the highest end of all his designs and acts, is not their welfare, but a supreme regard to himself; and their happiness is subordinate to this, as to his wisdom seemeth meet. It is impious, therefore, in a divine, when giving an account of God's design in giving his law, to leave that out altogether which is infinitely highest with God, in the giving of it. But this furnishes us with another reason why our author may have been led to deny vindictive justice to belong to the nature of God.

Because, if the law of God have not a supreme respect to himself, there cannot possibly be an infinite evil in the transgression of it; and consequently there could be no justice in God leading him to punish it on that account. May God enable Mr. Smith, and every one of us, to see clearly, that it is infinitely fit in God to regard himself supremely in his laws! and that the essence of sin consists in its contrariety to him, as

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David

David acknowledged, when he made his confession, " Against thee, thee only, have I sinned."

I am yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER VIII.

*Dear Brethren and Christians,*

**W**HEN Mr. Smith wrote his unchristian Letters in June 1790, he had a particular interest in appearing to the common people under the inspection of the Synod of Relief, to be of the same faith with his orthodox brethren, as it is contained in our explanatory standards; and therefore it was greatly fitted to impose upon their ignorance and credulity to write as he did: " That, to the utmost of his power, he guarded  
" against contradicting our standards in the subjects which he had published, and saw no reason to depart from the opinion of our fathers  
" as to doctrine." P. 29, Letters. This, no doubt, might answer the purpose of the moment among the uninformed, who were disposed to think favourably of Mr. Smith; but, when he published some of those very subjects about two years before he published his Letters, he gave his readers a very different account of things. He told them in his preface to his Essay on Truth, and the heretical performance which is bound  
up



up with it, " That it was of great importance to " purge popular systems as much as possible from " every thing absurd and unscriptural." Accordingly, in one of these publications, he wrote expressly against the doctrine of our Lord's atonement, as it stands in our systems; and in p. 5 of his preface, he told his readers, that he proposed to continue the plan, if it met with the approbation of the public; and to canvass, *in the same manner*, a number of important articles in our creed: and therefore he entreated such as favoured the undertaking, to send him materials for a scriptural illustration of man's original state—the fall—the covenants—human nature before conversion—good works—the gospel, &c.

Now, as he wrote against the account of our Lord's atonement, as contained in our standards, and proposed to canvass these subjects *in the same manner*, it is, I think, a fair conclusion, that he wished to purge the popular systems from the doctrines on these subjects, as they are taught in our systems. When a Christian compares these facts together, how can he refrain from relieving his heart by a sigh, and exclaiming, *How art thou fallen!*

Whether any person favoured Mr. Smith with materials for this undertaking, is best known to himself. What we are concerned with, is that which he hath thought proper to lay before the public. The two covenants state the different ways of obtaining happiness before God; the one by the perfect obedience of Adam, in case that was yielded; the other by the perfect obedience of Jesus Christ. Mr. Smith teaches a way different from either of these; and therefore we are warranted to say, it is a way in which no child

of Adam ever did, or ever will find happiness: it is, an imperfect sort of a covenant of works by the obedience of the sons of God. Let us examine it with care.

“ Two things, he says, are necessary to constitute a law: first, That it be enacted by one  
 “ possessed of legislative authority; and, secondly,  
 “ That the command be enforced by a proper  
 “ sanction. God exerciseth his authority over  
 “ men, not merely to make a display of his  
 “ power and dominion, but to promote the welfare of his subjects. A wise and affectionate  
 “ parent, possessed of unlimited authority, will  
 “ not exercise it in oppressing his offspring. He  
 “ endeavours to establish and exercise it for the  
 “ purpose of making them happy. In this very  
 “ light we ought to contemplate the operations  
 “ of God’s authority, in enacting the laws which  
 “ he hath given unto us. Hence the unspeakable  
 “ delight which his children have in obeying the statutes of their God; not only because  
 “ they are good in themselves, and beneficial to  
 “ us, but also as they are a testimony of the great  
 “ kindness and care of our heavenly Father. The  
 “ Spirit of God declareth that man to be blessed  
 “ who delighteth in his law, and meditates upon  
 “ it day and night; Ps. i. 12. ‘ O how do I love  
 “ thy law,’ said David. ‘ Thy words are sweeter  
 “ to me than honey from the comb, and more  
 “ to be desired than fine gold. In keeping of  
 “ them there is great reward;’ Ps. xix. Not  
 “ that God can in the least be profited by the  
 “ most perfect obedience possible, or that in any  
 “ degree the keeping of this law can entitle man  
 “ to a reward. But, as the eating of wholesome  
 “ food is rewarded by the pleasure it gives us,  
 “ and

“ and its happy effects on our constitution; so  
 “ the observation of these excellent precepts is  
 “ amply rewarded in the pleasure and real profit  
 “ which this yields to the willing mind. Hence  
 “ the sons of God, from experience, can tell how  
 “ it is better for them than their meat and their  
 “ drink to do the will of their heavenly Father.”  
 P. 19, 20.

Here our author states two things : the end of God in the laws which he hath enacted, namely, the welfare of his subjects ; and the cause or mean by which that welfare is obtained, namely, our obedience. It is true, Mr. Smith says, this obedience cannot in any degree entitle man to a reward ; but, at the same time, he teaches, that there is such a connection between this cause and effect as there is between the eating of wholesome food, and the rewards of pleasure and health. Now it is certain, that though the eating of the food, or the food itself, cannot entitle to the rewards of pleasure and health, yet the one is, by the constitution of God, the cause of the other. Thus, according to him, the keeping of the law is the cause of our welfare, though it do not intitle to it ; as wholesome food is the cause of health, though it doth not intitle to it. This is a doctrine, not only totally unfounded in the holy Scriptures, but in flat contradiction to them. It is very certain, that God holds out his law to man as a cause of his happiness, though it could not entitle to it in respect of right by merit ; but it is not to that kind of obedience which his people on earth yield that his promise is annexed. It is to a *perfect obedience*. The law saith, “ The man that doth them shall live in them ;” that is,  
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that doth them perfectly. But this law, being once broken in the least iota, it fails of this effect for ever. It worketh wrath, not happiness; Rom. iv. 15. It curseth "every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law;" Gal. iii. 10. And it holds out happiness to this kind of keeping, not with the view of making any man happy in this way, but that man, by seeing that he cannot be happy in this way, may find this law a "schoolmaster to lead him to Christ," that he may obtain happiness through him; Gal. iii. 24.

If the perfect law of God, being broken in the least iota, curses every one who continueth not in it, certainly the obedience of the sons of God, which every moment comes short of what the law requires, cannot be the cause of their happiness, as wholesome food is the cause of happy effects on our constitution.

It is very true that, in keeping the commands of God, there is great reward; but our obedience is not the cause of this, as wholesome food is the cause of health. The perfect obedience of the Son of God unto death, is the cause of saints being happy in keeping God's commandments. This was the cause of the happiness which David felt in the keeping of them. Happiness comes by promise; God gave it to Abraham and David by promise; and all the promises of God are in Christ yea, and amen. His obedience is the cause of all the sons of God being rewarded with the laws of God themselves. They are written on their hearts. This is itself a great reward. In this way they have the holy Spirit given to them, enabling them to keep these laws sincerely.

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They have the promise of the Spirit through faith; Gal. iii. 14: and in this way they have all the pleasure and the happiness which they feel in the keeping of them.

He, therefore, who teaches, that the happiness of the sons of God comes by their obedience, as pleasure and health come by eating of wholesome food, teaches in effect that Christ died in vain. O that my head were waters, that I might weep for this brother, who is so far removed from the grace of Christ to another gospel! "The law of truth should be in our mouth, and iniquity should not be found in our lips. For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at God's mouth; for they are the messengers of the Lord of hosts. If we depart out of the way; if we cause many to stumble at the law; if we *corrupt* the covenant of Levi; the Lord of hosts will make us *base* and *contemptible* before all the people, according as we have not kept all his ways, but have been *partial* in the law;" Mal. ii. 6—9.

I am your's, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER IX.

*Dear Brethren, &c.*

**I** PROCEED now to consider our author's very unscriptural account of our Lord's atonement.

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He seems to think he hath made a most important discovery on this subject; and is at great pains to prepare the minds of his readers for receiving it, by representing it as a pearl digged out of the most valuable mine in the world; and all those as agents for the devil who shall prevent it from being added to the treasure of our knowledge. Let us hear him speak for himself. "He who digs a truth out of the Scriptures, which hath long been buried under the traditions and errors of his fathers, and declares it before the world, presents a valuable pearl to the church. The best method by which the grand adversary shall prevent that addition to the treasure of our knowledge, is to excite his agents to array that discovery in heretical robes, and then represent its author as the foe of God and men;" p. 11. That the author meant himself, who has made this discovery, and that it respects his view of our Lord's atonement, is certain from his words, p. 53, "This is the form of that argument which I have endeavoured to illustrate;" see p. 9—13. Here we have got into this dilemma, either to renounce the doctrine of our Lord's atonement, as it is contained in our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, and receive Mr. Smith's pearl, or else be considered by him as an agent for the devil, if we oppose its being received as an addition to our knowledge. Now, though I do not believe Mr. S. is intentionally the foe either of God or man, yet I find myself under the necessity of opposing his doctrine, even though it is at the expence of being represented as an agent of the devil; not because it is contrary to popular system, but because I am certain it is contrary to the word of God.

But



But, that I may do all justice to this author, I shall beg my reader's indulgence, while I lay before him, in a page or two, a concise view of our author's whole scheme, of which his account of the atonement is a leading part. It is extended, in his publication, through more than forty pages.

"The Father of mercies, from his unbounded goodness, mercy, and wisdom, hath given us a law the most excellent, just, and good, wisely suited to our present situation; p. 19. This law consists of two parts; the commands of God, and a penalty. The commands, therefore, do not bind to obedience apart from the penalty; because the penalty is one of the things that is necessary to the constitution of a law; p. 19. The penalty, therefore, cannot be deserved by transgressing the command, but it springs from the love of God, in conjunction with the precept; p. 45. This penalty was devised by the wisdom of God, and is regulated, as to its nature and extent, rather by wisdom and goodness than by justice; for there is no rule known to us by which the proportion between the precept, (I suppose our author means the transgression of the precept) and the nature and extent of the penalty, can be determined. This is arbitrable to the legislator; p. 29. The sole design of the penalty is to establish the authority of the legislator, and enforce obedience; p. 20. The design of the law is the welfare of God's subjects; p. 19. *God's glory is wholly left out.* This welfare is obtained by obedience; not that obedience entitles to it, but it is caused by obedience, just as pleasure, and the profitable effects to our constitution, are caused by eating wholesome food; p. 20. This is

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the way that our heavenly Father hath taken to promote our best interests; p. 21. And therefore, if the penalty annexed to the precept be not regularly inflicted in case of disobedience, the law would lose its force; the authority of the law be disregarded; and all the goodness and care of our heavenly Father defeated. From this ariseth the necessity of punishment; p. 21.

“ These laws, consisting of commands of God, which do not bind to obedience, unless an arbitrary penalty, springing from God’s love, and devised by his wisdom, had been added to them, were broken. All the sufferings which God had measured out for his own Son, when he became a sacrifice substituted in the place of the guilty, must of necessity by him be endured; p. 28. These sorrows contained in them that very anguish which must be born by the wicked for ever in hell; with this difference, they behoved to make a deeper impression on a guilty than on a pure and innocent mind; p. 28. An impression ten-fold more awful and heavy; p. 49. This penalty, ten-fold more awful and weighty to the guilty than to an innocent person, was inflicted upon his own Son with inflexible severity; p. 46. But it was not *all* that punishment that was incurred by many millions. That would have been no illustration of the penalty, nor any emblem of what individuals had to expect; p. 29. For the sole design of the penalty springing from love, was to establish the authority of the legislator, and enforce obedience; p. 20: and therefore the design of God in inflicting this penalty ten-fold easier to an innocent person than to the guilty, was to establish his authority among men, and magnify that law which he had given to  
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men for their welfare, by obedience to it; because the drinking of this cup by Christ serves the same purposes in the government of the world which the execution of the penalty upon transgressors doth; p. 28. For, as the chief reason why a wise and affectionate parent punisheth a disobedient child in the presence of his brethren, is to establish his authority over the whole family, and to keep in awe; so the Father of mercies regulated the sufferings of his own Son, who was punished openly in the midst of his brethren, in the manner which he saw best calculated to maintain his divine authority over his own family; p. 46."

This, to the best of my judgment, is a true skeleton of Mr. Smith's scheme, and the sum of his account of our Lord's atonement is: Men have become guilty before God, by breaking commands which he gave them for their happiness, but which did not bind to obedience apart from an arbitrary penalty springing from God's love, and devised by his wisdom. God, in the greatness of his love, appointed his Son to bear this arbitrary penalty, without any mitigation, in the place of the guilty; and he really bore it: but it was ten-fold less awful and heavy to an innocent person than to the guilty. The design of God, in inflicting this penalty, was not to receive *any satisfaction* to vindictive justice; for there is *no justice of this kind* in God; but it was to prevent the law from losing its force, which God had given to men that they might be happy in keeping of it, as men have pleasure and real profit to their constitution in eating wholesome food.

Now, seeing God's laws are not of the nature  
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which our author has stated, as I have already shewed; seeing they bind on other grounds than an arbitrary penalty; seeing God never gave to men any such laws, with the view that they might be made happy in, or by obedience to them, it is evident it must be impossible that ever men could become guilty by transgressing them: and therefore it is impossible that ever any such arbitrary penalty could be endured by Jesus Christ. Thus our author's discovery, declared before the world, and presented to the church as a valuable pearl, is so far from being digged out of the holy Scriptures, that it is impossible it could ever have a being in them: and therefore it cannot be admitted as an addition to the treasure of our knowledge, but ought to be rejected as an abominable error, springing from the enemy of God and man.

The commands of God are laws. They bind to obedience, because he is Jehovah, our God and Redeemer, independent of all arbitrary penalty. He hath given them to men ultimately for his own glory. The transgression of them *deserves* God's wrath and curse, both in this life and that which is to come. This was the curse which Christ bore, in the essence of it; and, by bearing it, made atonement. But of this in my next. O that it would please God to convince men of the great evil of "bringing in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them, and bringing upon themselves swift destruction!" I believe Mr. Smith is very far from doing so intentionally, but, alas! he is doing so really.

I am, yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

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## LETTER X.

*Rev. and dear Brethren, &c.*

TWO things, among others, appear to me to have had a considerable influence in misleading the judgment of Mr. S. on the important subject of our Lord's atonement. He seems inconsiderately to have adopted a strange proposition as a sort of first principle, which is not true in itself; and then he seems to have drawn a conclusion from it which by no means follows, though the proposition had been true. The proposition is this; "There is no rule known to us by which the proportion between the precept of God, and the nature and extent of the penalty, can be known;" p. 29. His conclusion, therefore, is, "It is wisdom and goodness, rather than justice, which regulates the nature and extent of the penalty;" p. 29.

The proposition is certainly not true; for the works of the law written on the heart of the heathen taught them, with respect to many crimes, "that they who committed them were worthy of death." And we Christians know, that sin, being in its nature enmity against a Being of infinite perfection, it must have an infinite moral evil in it on this account; and therefore must deserve an infinite punishment; for, as the demerit is, so the punishment ought to be. This is a clear conclusion; and revelation furnishes  
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abundant data for it, of which no Christian writer ought to be ignorant.

But, admitting the proposition had been true, our author's conclusion is illogical. For doth it follow, that though we were ignorant of the proportion between the transgression of the precept, and the nature and extent of the penalty, that there is none? May there not be a proportion, though men were ignorant of it? May not God know it, though men did not? If this author could have said with truth, there is no proportion known to God between the transgression and the penalty, his conclusion would have been just, that the penalty was arbitrary. But to infer, that because a man is ignorant, therefore the penalty must be arbitrary, to God, is reasoning of which I hope Mr. S. hath seen cause to be ashamed.

Surely, it is infinitely more worthy of God, to conceive of him as punishing sin because it deserves it, than to suppose that from love he devised a penalty of eternal damnation, and laid that penalty, in part at least, upon his own Son, in order to establish his authority, and enforce obedience, for man's welfare, just as pleasure and health are got by eating wholesome food; which, after all, for near 6000 years, has failed universally of that effect. This is a view of God which fills one with horror; and it is astonishing how Mr. S. could let any thing drop from his pen, which warrants a conclusion of this kind.

But it is time to consider what the Scripture says concerning our Lord's atonement.

Among men, an atonement is that which appeases the anger of a person, by satisfying his claims for some offence,

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The atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ consisted of that done and suffered by him in the stead of his people which satisfied all the claims of God's justice for their sins, and thus appeased his anger against them. God is not bound by his nature to acts of grace toward sinners. He may do with his own what seemeth good unto him; but if he determines to forgive sin, his perfect nature binds him to do it in a way that manifests the contrariety of that nature to this evil thing. If sin be committed against himself; if the very essence of the evil of it consists in this, that it is contrariety to him, the ground of punishment must lie here also. This is the view which God himself gives us of the ground of punishment. It is not because a man doth not consult his own happiness, properly speaking, that God punishes his sin. This is only a finite evil, and can only deserve a finite punishment. The essence of the evil of sin is wanting here, namely, its enmity against an infinite Being, in all his perfections, and in all his relations. Neither is it because sin is a transgression of God's law, in an abstract point of view, that he punishes it. It is true, sin is defined by the apostle to be a transgression of the law, and therefore it may be argued that the punishment of sin is intended as a satisfaction to the law. But I ask, what law is it of which sin is the transgression? Is it not the law which requires the perfect love of God? Certainly. The evil of transgression, then, doth not consist in acting contrary to a rule apart from every thing else, but it lyes in acting contrary to the supreme love of him whom the law supremely respects. The law requires perfect love to God.

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Sin is a transgression of this perfect law. The evil of it, then, consists in its being done against him. He is the perfect judge of that in which the evil of sin consists, and the infallible informer of the ground for which he punishes it.

"Let all the earth be silent before him. None else is judge" in this matter "but God. Speak, Lord, and thy servants will hear. "God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth. The Lord revengeth, and is furious: The Lord will take vengeance on *his adversaries*, and he reserveth wrath for *his enemies*. Na. i. 2." Here God, the Judge, tells us, that it is as men are *his adversaries* and *enemies* that he taketh vengeance. Again, v. 8, "Darkness shall pursue *his enemies*." In Deut. xxxii. 41, God says, "I will render vengeance to *mine enemies*, and will reward them that *hate me*." In like manner, Isa. lix. 18, "According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay fury to *his adversaries*, recompence to *his enemies*." Again, Isa. lxvi. 14, "The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward *his enemies*." On this subject, of the ground of the punishment of sin, it appears to me of great moment to observe, that when God speaks of his punishing sin in hell, he takes particular notice that the cause of it is transgressing against *him*; "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against *me*; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh;" Isa. lxvi. 24. And in Rom. ii. 5, this punishment of the wicked in hell for hating God, and sinning against him, is said to be "the revelation of the  
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*righteous judgment of God.*" Oh! if we saw more clearly the horrible evil of enmity against God, we would subscribe more readily to the perfection of his nature, necessarily leading him to punish it on its own account.

Now that punishment which sin deserves, Christ suffered. The righteousness of God's nature armed Omnipotence with vengeance. It cannot extort. This is injustice. It cannot, however, but exact. The offence is infinite in demerit; the satisfaction, therefore, must be infinite also; otherwise infinite demerit would still be unatoned for. Accordingly we are informed, that "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The reason of punishing any sin on its own account, holds good as a reason for punishing every sin; because the nature and tendency of it against God is the same: and therefore, when it is said, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all," it must mean, that he inflicted the whole of the punishment which the sins of his people deserved.

Now, what sin deserved was the curse of God. That Christ was made; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Here we are instructed, that the curse which Christ was made had in it a correspondence to the curse which the law threatened. But the law threatened a curse for every transgression in every degree of it. It said, "Curfed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them;" Gal. iii. 10. Seeing, then, that Christ suffered the curse which the law threatened, he must have given full satisfaction to the

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justice of God for every kind and every degree of transgression against which the curse was denounced; otherwise part of that curse would still remain against the believer in Christ, who had not continued in all things which the law required. But this is contrary to the apostle's declaration, that "Christ hath redeemed them from the curse of the law." There is another Scripture from which the same conclusion may be drawn with equal force. In 2 Cor. v. 21, the apostle says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now, the righteousness of God is certainly the righteousness which God, in his grace, made the condition of life to his people, in case his holy law was broken. That grace made no change of the penalty incurred by breaking the holy commandments of God. It made a change only as to the person who should suffer that penalty. That person was God's own Son, chosen by God himself, with which substitution the Son declared himself well pleased; "To do thy will," he said, "I take delight." When, therefore, it is said, "God made him to be sin," it cannot mean he made him unholy. This was infinitely impossible, either for God to cause, or for Christ to become. It must therefore mean, that God punished him for sin. This was either in part or in whole. If in part only, this was not the righteousness of God, because it was not the righteousness of the law. Seeing, therefore, that Paul says, "God made Christ sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," that righteousness must consist of  
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the whole that the law required; that is, the whole penalty, as well as its precept. This is the righteousness of the law. The righteous Lawgiver says, "Thou shalt by no means come out of prison till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing;" Matth. v. 26. Those for whom Jesus Christ was made sin were in prison. Christ came, "to say to the prisoners, Go forth." It must therefore be by paying the uttermost farthing. This is the true nature of the atonement of Christ. This made the sacrifice of Christ "an offering of a sweet-smelling savour unto God." This "magnified the law, and made it honourable;" but this could never have been said with truth, if it had not been equal to the claims of the law. It exalted the law in the righteousness of every thing that it threatened, because it was infinite satisfaction for infinite demerit. It was the blood of God for the sin of man. The law never had such honour, nor was it possible it could. This is the true nature of the atonement of Jesus Christ; and being a true and full atonement to God for all the sins of all his people, the pardon of all sins becomes an act of justice to sinners of every size and of every nation, who have faith in his blood. God intended to glorify his perfections in the salvation of men, in a mysterious kind of operation. We can easily see how mercy should be glorified in pardoning the guilty; but the pardon of what is committed against God himself, is an act of the strictest justice in God; so that it would be unjust to withhold it from him that believeth in Jesus: this was a kind of operation of justice, worthy of the wisdom of God to contrive, and nothing but that wisdom was equal to it. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through

faith in his blood, to declare his *righteousness*, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare, I say, at this time *his righteousness*, "that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26.

If any reader wishes for more evidence than I have given of our blessed Redeemer having satisfied the vindictive justice of God, I would recommend to their serious perusal the Rev. Mr. Bell's translation of Peter Alinga, one sentiment, in p. 32, (I suppose inadvertently expressed by the author) excepted; and also Mr. Bell's own answer to Dr. M'Gill, with his judicious note, p. 246. I cannot refrain from recommending also three discourses on the Divine and mediatorial character of Jesus Christ, by the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, minister of the gospel in Paisley.

May God, for the sake of the great atonement, remove every stumbling block out of the way of Mr. S's understanding its true nature, and convince him that other *pearl*, as a foundation, can no man lay.

I am yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER XI.

*Dear Brethren, &c.*

WHEN I look into the holy Scriptures I find the inspired writers represent the penalty of God's law, next to sin itself, as the greatest of all evils. On



On the other hand, Jesus Christ, and the salvation of God by him, are represented as the greatest of all blessings. My reason, my conscience, and my feelings as a man and a Christian lead me to pronounce in this manner; and I presume other Christians perceive, and judge, and feel, as to these subjects, just as I do myself.

The penalty of the law, and the curse of the law are two words of the same meaning. The curse of the law a sinner is commanded to dread, and to flee for refuge to Christ, that he may be delivered from it. Salvation in all its extent we are commanded to receive, and to behold the manifold wisdom and marvellous goodness of God, in providing it for a lost world.

But Mr. S. would have his readers to believe a most impious doctrine, which, like transubstantiation, will not believe for me, nor, I may safely affirm, for any man, Mr. S. himself not excepted. It is this, that, though the penalty of God's commands is consistent with justice, yet in that which was inflicted on Adam and his posterity for his disobedience, we are directed chiefly to behold the manifold wisdom and *marvellous goodness* of God. Nay, as though it would not have been enough to have placed this proposition by itself, this daring rash writer classes it on the same scale of goodness with the gift of righteousness and the grace of God by Jesus Christ; though I hope he did not intend that his readers should consider them as of equal magnitude. His words are:

"In God's procedure with man, two things are  
 "very remarkable. The first is, that by one man's  
 "disobedience many were made sinners. The second  
 "is, that by the obedience of another many  
 "are made righteous. By one offence death entered

"tered into the world, and passed upon all men ;  
 " so, by the death of one man, the gift of righteousness and grace of God reign through life  
 " unto many. *Though both these are consistent with*  
*" justice, yet we are directed chiefly to behold in them*  
*" the manifold wisdom and marvellous goodness of*  
*" God ;"* p. 29.

This author tells his readers, in his flimsy and ungentlemanly letters, published at Dundee, that he saw no reason to differ from our fathers as to doctrine. Now what is the doctrine of our fathers, as to the penalty of God's law. It consists, according to them, of those evils to which the sin of Adam exposed himself and all his posterity. The Westminster assembly of divines, the Church of Scotland, the synod of Relief, and all the Protestant churches, so far as I know, in the world, teach that the first offence of the first man brought mankind into a state of sin and misery. They say, that the state of sin consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of our whole nature, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

And they teach that the misery of this state consists in the loss of communion with God, liahleness to his wrath and curse, to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Now I ask this author, where it is to be found, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelation, that we are chiefly directed to behold God's marvellous goodness in these tremendous evils? or if he can seriously think it possible that God, who delights in mercy, and to whom judgment is a strange work, can direct men chiefly to behold

behold his manifold goodness in that which exposes them to endless and inconceivable misery? This new species of impiety attempts to confound the nature of things, and to destroy the eternal distinctions which God hath taught us to make, both by his word and by our reasonable nature, between his different perfections and their different effects.

Did Paul teach the churches that though none of the evils which came upon the Jews for rejecting the Messias were inconsistent with justice, yet they were directed chiefly to behold in them the marvellous goodness of God? No. He considered goodness as a quite different kind of thing; and he marked the difference so clearly, that no Christian can mistake. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God, on them who fell severity, but towards thee goodness; Rom. xi. 32.

Again, did the apostle tell the Romans, that in the indignation and wrath, the tribulation and anguish which awaits every soul that doth evil, though there is nothing inconsistent with justice, yet we are directed chiefly to behold the marvellous goodness of God? No; but in these horrible evils we are directed to behold the revelation of the righteous judgement of God; Rom. ii. 5.

I cannot see how it is possible for any enlightened Christian, whose heart is made tender by the spirit of God, not to be shocked when he finds this author classing the curse of the law, deserved by sin, with the salvation of Christ, as objects in which we are directed chiefly to behold the marvellous goodness of God.

I know Mr. S. has a sort of salvo for this conduct, in his scheme, composed of different particulars, such as, that the commands of God are

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not laws apart from the penalty; that the penalty springs from the love of God; and that God makes great use of this penalty, both as threatened and inflicted on the wicked in hell, and on his own son in the room of his people, for preventing sin, and exciting to obedience.

As to the first of these particulars, we have already shewed that it is altogether unfounded in revelation; and must be so, because it is impossible in the nature of things; therefore no more needs to be said in answer to it.

With respect to the second particular, it is true Mr. S. hath taught that the penalty springs from love, and was devised by wisdom; but he has not pretended to prove any of these assertions either from Scripture or philosophy. Indeed both of these sources fail him here, just as they do in the former particular; but besides this he has overturned all support to his cause from this quarter by the account which he himself has given us of the nature of the penalty: for he tells us, "that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, and that by one offence death entered into the world, and passed upon all men;" p. 29. Now, will any man of sober reason say, that it was possible that all mankind, being made sinners, and subjected to death, could spring from the love of God?

Our author's doctrine, therefore, that the penalty springs from love, can do him no service in this part of his scheme, both because it is untrue in itself, and because his explication of it shows that it is an evil, and not a good.

As to our author's third particular, be it so that God makes use of the penalty for preventing sin and enforcing obedience, yet that surely cannot  
prove

prove, that though it is not inconsistent with justice, yet we are directed chiefly to behold, in the execution of it on mankind, the marvellous goodness of God, just as we are to behold the marvellous goodness of God in the salvation of Christ.

Surely those who shall feel this penalty for ever will not think the execution of it marvellous goodness to them; and as for the saints in heaven, we do not find them expressing themselves in language like our author, saying, " Though the penalty is not inconsistent with justice, yet we are directed chiefly to behold thy manifold wisdom and marvellous goodness in the execution of it," but they say, " True and righteous are thy judgments, Lord God Almighty." Rev. xvi. 7.

Certainly the penalty itself, and the use which God, only wise, makes of it, are essentially different things. Sin is the greatest of all evils; yet God has made use of it for effecting the most important of all his designs, the glorification of himself in the highest manner by the salvation of his people. But would it not be shocking blasphemy, for this reason, to class sin and salvation together, as objects in which we are directed to behold the manifold wisdom and marvellous goodness of God!

In like manner, seeing sin is the cause of the penalty, and the inflicting of it by a righteous God is represented as his strange act, in which he hath no pleasure, as it is misery to his creatures, and seeing the salvation of men by Jesus Christ is the delight of God, it appears to us an high affront offered to him to represent him as directing us to consider the penalty as not inconsistent with justice indeed, but chiefly as that in which his marvellous goodness is displayed, as well, though

not as much, as in his salvation by his only begotten Son.

This representation of the curse, and salvation from it, appears also to us highly dishonouring to our Lord Jesus Christ. How is it possible that he can be pleased to find a pretended minister of his placing the curse due to the sins of men on the same scale of goodness with his glorious salvation, which he thought it worthy of him to make himself of no reputation, and suffer the curse of the law to procure for his people. Father forgive him, for he knoweth not what he doth.

I am, yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

## LETTER XII.

*Rev. and dear Brethren, &c.*

MR. S. professes an high esteem of the holy Scriptures. He would have his readers to believe that he has searched them with an eye of superior illumination and profound discernment, and also with an heart unbiassed by attachment to vulgar systems. He thinks himself qualified to reform these, by purging them from unscriptural dross, and therefore he would have Dr. Priestly, Dr. McGill, and all the men of talents to believe that his doctrines, which stand opposed to these vulgar systems, are pearls of inestimable value, digged out of the holy Scriptures, from under the errors  
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and rubbish of systems composed by our fathers in the times of ignorance. By professions of this nature the expectations of readers are ready to be screwed up to an high key. The evangelical part of them, therefore, cannot, I think, but feel themselves disappointed, when, among other unscriptural doctrines, they find our author teaching, that it is an *easy matter* to persuade men to seek justification by the righteousness of Christ.

His words are, "It is not difficult to persuade men to seek justification through his righteousness. They are not so easily induced to follow his example. On this therefore the preacher ought chiefly to dwell, though the depravity of professors induceth them to dislike the doctrine, it is for that very reason necessary and important." p. 57.

The example which Christ set before men was holy obedience to God, in the very perfection of it. It was the perfection of beauty, and made the Redeemer always the delight of his Father. To be like him is the highest ambition of saints. This is the mark at which they habitually aim; and it is just as easy to persuade this part of professors to follow the example of Christ, as it is to persuade them to seek justification through his righteousness. The holy Spirit of God, which dwelleth in them, leads them to rest on the righteousness of Christ for their safety before God, and to follow the example of Christ for the glorification of their Father who is in heaven. As to the other part of professors, the depravity of their heart stands every whit as much in the way of seeking justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ as it doth in the way of following his example. I believe, that whoever consults the workings of

his own heart, examines human nature accurately, observes the matter of fact in the world, and credits the Divine evidence, will find ample testimony of an intellectual and moral pride in man, that strongly resists submission to the righteousness of Christ. I advance a step farther, and affirm, that as the mind of unconverted professors increases in knowledge, and the heart improves in natural virtue, they become much more unwilling to seek justification by the righteousness of Christ than to imitate his example ; only after all, it is not a right imitation, though they may think it is. Like a good painting, perhaps it is a striking likeness ; but in all unconverted men it cannot rise higher than the imitation of nature by art : a fine picture it may be, but without life. As Christ is not made of God unto them righteousness, neither is he made sanctification. At the same time, as they imagine the life of Christ consisted of the same kind of moral excellence with their own, they wish to be considered as imitators of it, while they condemn, as fantastical, the doctrine of justification freely by grace, through the righteousness of Christ Jesus. Among the Jews, those professors who were the most punctual in observing the external institutions of divine worship, were, at the same time, the most distinguished for their opposition to justification before God through the righteousness of Christ ; and among the learned heathen moralists the case was precisely the same also. The apostle Paul lamented, with an heavy heart, that he preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a *stumbling-block*, and to the Greeks foolishness. Christ himself complained sadly that these Jews would not come to him that they might have life. And though Mr. S. rashly dares to tell us it is not difficult to persuade men to seek justification  
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through the righteousness of Christ, yet God himself tells us, that, in persuading the Jews to this, he " stretched out his hand all the day long to a disobedient and gainsaying people ;" for so the apostle applies the Scripture. Rom. x. 21.

The truth upon this subject is, as seeking justification in this way presupposes an acknowledgement of the righteousness of God in our condemnation, and a renunciation of all self-dependence before God, nothing less than that mighty power which wrought in Christ when it raised him from the dead, is able to persuade the soul to seek justification in this way. So it was foretold, Isaiah ii. 17. " The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that " day." And when this takes place in the soul of a man, it is not difficult to induce him to follow the holy example of Christ, because now he is united to him as a branch to the vine, or as the body to the head ; and as it is natural for the branch to bear fruit, or for the body to follow where the head influences, so it is agreeable to the holy members of Jesus Christ to follow his holy example. This one thing they delight to do ; " forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press towards the mark of perfection for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Because Mr. S. thinks it is an easy matter to persuade men to seek justification through Christ, and difficult to persuade them to follow his example, he quotes Tit. iii. 8. to prove that it is on the example of Christ that the preacher ought chiefly to dwell. But, alas ! this Scripture, like many others, seems not to have been understood by him



him when he quoted it, because it is so far from supporting his doctrine that, on the contrary, it proves that the preacher ought chiefly to dwell on the leading doctrines of Christianity as the means appointed of God for maintaining good works among the saints. To dwell chiefly on the works which a Christian ought to perform is no more fitted to make him perform them than a parent's constantly teaching a son his duty, while he nearly starves him for want of food, is fitted to make him perform it.

In the example of Christ we see the high standard of perfect holiness; but in the leading doctrines of the gospel we have the food that strengthens the soul for the real imitation of it. Hence the apostle commands Titus to affirm, not this thing constantly, as Mr. S. would limit the words of Paul to one kind of thing, the imitation of Christ, but these things constantly. What things? Let Paul be heard for himself.

“ The kindness and love of God our Saviour in saving us, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, namely, That those who are justified by grace are heirs of eternal life; and these glorious discoveries and expressions of the kindness and love of God our Saviour, “ I will that thou, O Titus, and all ministers of Christ, affirm constantly to the end that all who have truly believed in God, may, by the consideration of this love of his, in its great and everlasting effects, be daily careful to maintain

tain good works." These things, though in no wise the grounds of the justification of saints before God, yet they are excellent in their own nature, and profitable to men. This, I think, is the plain meaning of the apostle. So he practised himself. "I determined," said he to the Corinthians, "to know, that is, to make known nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." This is gospel, which Christ commanded to preach to every creature. Conformity to the example of Christ, and sanctification, are the same. This master in Israel hath taught us that God's truth known and believed by his disciples is the great instrument of promoting it. Hence his own intercessory prayer, "sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" John xvii. 17. The gospel is the healing balm, under the wings of the sun of righteousness, which cures the diseases of the souls of those who fear the name of God, by which they go forth in the imitation of Christ, and grow up fattened in the graces of the spirit, "like calves of the stall;" Mal. iv. 2.

In the plain promises of God, it is the uncorrupted milk of the word by which the babes in Christ are fed; and, in the decrees of God, and transactions of the Trinity in redemption, it is the strong meat which strengthens the Christians, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

It pains my heart, therefore, to find Mr. S. teaching that it is not difficult to persuade men to seek that through Christ which God himself tells us men refused to do, though he himself, with the greatest earnestness, stretched out his hand all the day persuading them to it. And it pains my heart to find him handling the word of God,  
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though I hope not deceitfully, yet untruly, to support a Socinian mode of preaching, contrary to the example of the apostle, and his express directions, as well as the import of our Lord's prayer. May the Lord the Spirit bring him back from the error of his way, and prevent preachers and Christians from being misled by him.

I am yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

### LETTER XIII.

*Dear Brethren, &c.*

IN this Letter, which is to be my last, I propose to examine some other particulars which this author hath thought proper to publish to the world. In p. 57 he teaches, "That the preacher ought chiefly to dwell on inducing his hearers to follow the example of Christ." This position is neither supported by precept nor example in the New Testament. Christ told his disciples *once*, that he set before them an example of humble condescension for the good of one another. And Peter told those *once* to whom he wrote, that Christ set his followers an example of meek and patient suffering; but whatever Socinian preachers may do or recommend, certainly neither Jesus Christ nor his apostles dwelt chiefly on this. Not but that it is the intention of Jesus Christ to have all his followers conformed to himself in holiness; but it is the preaching of the gospel that he hath ap-



pointed for this purpose, because the gospel brings the holy spirit along with it, for conforming us to this example. This only would I learn of Mr. S. if ever he hath received the holy spirit, did he receive it, "by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith;" Gal. iii. 2.

Again, Mr. S. certainly writes in a very inconsistent manner, in recommending to teachers to dwell chiefly on the example of Christ, because he ought to have known that the obedience of Jesus Christ to his Father was obedience to commands which had no penalty annexed against him, in case he did not obey them; for, being God as well as man, it was impossible but that he would obey even unto death. But Mr. S. hath taught that God's commands are not laws without a penalty. It is therefore very inconsistent to recommend to teachers to dwell chiefly on inducing their hearers to follow an example, which, on his principles, was not obedience to law, and which virtually implies in it a giving up with obedience, to what, according to him, only binds a man.

We heartly join with Mr. S. in condemning all those teachers who covet the approbation of the people, by healing the wounds of their souls too slightly. But we think this cannot be done in the manner Mr. S. seems to teach, by opposing the gospel to the law; because it is God himself who hath done this, and faithful ministers have only the honour of pointing out that opposition, as it is recorded by the Holy Spirit. The law is not of faith; but the man that doth them shall live in them. But the just by faith shall live, or the just shall live by faith. In finding fault with teachers, therefore, for opposing the gospel

to the law, we fear Mr. S. hath inconsiderately found fault with him who wounds by the law, that he may heal by the gospel. In this way he wounded and healed Saul of Tarsus; "when the commandment came sin revived, and I died;" Rom. vii. 9. "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live;" Gal. ii. 20.

It is the prescriptions of Socinians and other legalists, by which the wounds of the soul are too slightly healed. By the imitation of Christ, they mean little, if any thing more, than the practice of natural virtue, and they prescribe this not indeed as the meritorious ground of man's welfare before God, but yet as that which is the cause of it, *just as the eating of wholesome food is the cause of happy effects upon our constitution.* Thus they are guilty of high treason against God. Under the pretence of honouring the example of Christ, they are guilty of trampling under foot the Son of God; they are guilty of counting his blood an unholy thing.

The obedience of Christ was obedience of a very peculiar kind. It was the obedience of a mediator between God and man. It was the obedience of one who was God as well as man, and therefore it is called in Scripture the righteousness of God. It was intended to accomplish a work of God, which all the obedience of all the other intelligent creation of God could not effect. It was obedience which had proper merit in it before God, which no mere creature obedience can possibly have. When they have done all those things which are commanded them they must say, "they are unprofitable servants." The obedience of Jesus Christ, therefore, on the footing of justice, was able to purchase deliverance from the curse

curse of the law, and all that positive good which the vessels of mercy are to be the subjects of for ever. To attempt to heal the wounds of the soul, therefore, in any other way than this, is robbing our Lord Jesus Christ of the most precious jewel in his mediatory crown, and, in stead of healing, deceives and stupifies till there be no remedy. The law worketh wrath. It is the sun of righteousness alone who hath the healing under his wings. Here is a righteousness commensurate to every claim, a righteousness which magnifies the law and makes it honourable, and here is the living water; the holy spirit, which law knows nothing of, by which alone the dominion of sin is broken, the love of sin is exchanged for the hatred of it, the love of God produced, and the true imitation of Christ, *turning to God*, carried on effectually in the soul of a saint.

Unconverted men have a better opinion of personal virtue for healing the wounds of the soul, than of the stripes of a crucified Galilean. So Naaman the leper, thought Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel for healing him. But God's prophet thought otherwise. "Go," said he, "and wash in Jordan seven times; and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." Happily the leper was convinced of his mistake; he obeyed the prophet, and was healed. Jesus Christ is the fountain opened by God himself for healing. Here we must wash, or die of our wounds; for he that hath not the son hath no life, the wrath of God abideth on him.

In p. 58, Mr. S. expresseth himself in terms of strong disapprobation of those who desire to hear nothing other than the peculiar doctrines of christianity.



tianity. His words are very remarkable. "Those," he says, "who have attended to the conduct of mankind, and the causes from which it proceeds, will agree, that, in general, those professors who desire to hear nothing other than the peculiar doctrines of christianity, and are unpardonably indulged with a doctrine suited to their inclinations, become full of spiritual pride, illiberal, uncharitable, deceitful, and bad members of society. They are greedy of gain, unfaithful in friendship, backbiters, indocile, and cruel." Afterward he represents men who desire to hear nothing other than these doctrines, as having a *depraved taste*, and that teachers who accommodate their doctrine to this taste, cherish the viciousness of their hearts, and will have an awful account to give in on the day of judgement.

Alas! it is an undoubted fact that many of the hearers of the gospel are chargeable with the sins he hath mentioned, yet it by no means follows that this is owing to the causes which he assigns. Certainly neither the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, nor the hearing of them, are, in their own nature, fitted to produce or cherish sins of any kind. They are doctrines according to godliness; and a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. If indeed men mistake their true nature, imagining these doctrines provide for their salvation, while they indulge themselves in sin, no wonder if they become full of spiritual pride, like the Jews, who believed God was their father; but divine doctrines and mistakes about them are different things, and their effects ought not to be confounded with one another.

Paul

Paul tells us, " he determined to know nothing among the Corinthians, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Yet who but such a writer as Mr. S. alas! has shewn himself to be, would dare to say that the desire of hearing nothing other than Jesus crucified was a depraved taste, and filled them with spiritual pride and other sins, and that Paul, for having suited his doctrine to this taste, has an awful account to give in on the day of judgement. But what shall we say, Mr. S. hath been left, in the righteous judgement of God, to write against some of the peculiar doctrines of christianity; he is no more, therefore, than consistent with himself when he condemns the desire of hearing them and also the teaching of them. We have already seen that he hath wrote against the Father and the Son; I do not mean intentionally, but I say actually. In his carnal man's character, and supplement, he hath, in the same manner, wrote against the Holy Spirit. This, though it can give no favourable opinion of our author as a Calvinistic divine, may help to account both for the respectful manner in which he writes of some of those Socinians who reject the doctrine of our Lord's atonement altogether, and for the unmerited gross abuse of all the Calvinistic divines that ever were, or now are in the world, who have understood the apostle Paul, from Rom. vii. 14, to the end of the chapter, as speaking of himself, and describing the conflict between sin and grace in his soul after his conversion. As to some who reject the doctrine of our Lord's atonement, such as Dr. Priestly, he represents them as men of abilities, talents, learning, candour, and worth, p. 54, 59, 60, but as for Calvinistic divines, who explain the passage,

sage, as I have mentioned, above a whole section, consisting of near twelve pages of his supplement; is employed in describing them as men of the very worst of moral characters. The title of this section is : " The guilt with which all those are chargeable, who propagate the general interpretation of this passage." *being the same as the*

In p. 9. of the carnal man's character, this author admits that every part of Rom. vii. from the 14 verse, to the end, is interpreted by Calvinists in a consistency with the apostle's real character. One would have expected after this, that if he did not consider them as men of abilities, and talents, and learning, as he represents Dr. Priestly, and some of his kind, at least he would have represented them as honest men ; but, instead of this, he affirms they are chargeable with the most criminal abuse of the sacred Scriptures; being guilty of perverting and grossly misrepresenting a great number of passages of the word of God; guilty of using a freedom unwarrantable and dangerous; guilty of cutting and carving, adding to and taking away from the words of Scripture; guilty of directly contradicting God's spirit, and making him dictate a downright falsehood; guilty of abusing God's word in a manner that cannot be exemplified by the very worst heretics, who believed the Scriptures to be canonical. Every advocate for the general opinion, he says, is chargeable with this guilt. Dickinson, Stafford, and others, he says, have wrested the words in the same manner; they are all guilty of rendering the word of none effect, and shaking, to the foundation, the fabric of our faith; guilty of giving the lie to the Holy Ghost; guilty of labouring to defeat his kind purpose in behalf of the ungodly; guilty of  
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of setting themselves in opposition to God ; guilty of their blood who perish in consequence of embracing this opinion that Paul is giving an account of himself as to what he was after his conversion in Rom. vii. from the 14. verse to the end of the chapter ; guilty of wresting the word of God in a most criminal manner ; guilty of holding up to the world the characteristic marks of sinners, as certain evidences of grace ; guilty of vending poison of a most deadly nature, even soul-killing doctrines.

I ask my reader if ever he knew characters more deserving of public execration than these. Yet I am nowise surprised to find the pen thus employed, which hath been lifted up against so many of the truths of God. He tells us God's curse now threatens us, after our fault hath been set before us ; happily for us it is Mr. S. who is witness, judge, and jury. When he wrote these gross accusations, of thousands of the most deserving characters that ever adorned the christian profession, I hope, like those who crucified our Redeemer, he knew not what he did ; and therefore I pray, Father forgive him. I suppose that a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge, induced this author to publish both his carnal man's character and supplement : Their several merits I cannot at present particularly examine ; only in general, I must say, they appear to me an hotch-potch caldron of blind zeal, ignorance, error, mangled scriptures, untruth, contradiction, quaint criticism, sophistical reasoning, unphilosophical principles, Antinomianism, and gross unfounded accusations of learned divines and pious  
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Christians. The evidence of these things will afterwards appear when the publications themselves come to be closely considered.

I am, yours, &c.

ALEX. SIMPSON.

# ERRATA.

Page 2. line 2. *for* Presbytery of Fife, *r.* Presbytery of Dysart in Fife.

- 7. — 9. *for* defence, *r.* desire.
- 10. — 27. put a comma after *controversy*, and *r.* thorny as it is.
- 10. — 28. dele *as*, and *r.* It is long since, &c.
- 11. — 8. *for* deadly, *r.* radical.
- 16. — 22. *for* his, *r.* this.
- 17. — 18. *for* friend *r.* friends.
- 18. — 6. *for* drops *r.* drop.
- 19. — 7. *for* passion *r.* poison.
- 20. — 4. dele semicolon after the word *deity*.
- 21. — 23. after the word *lie* put a comma, and dele the semicolon.
- 27. — 33. *for* love *r.* will.
- 28. — 30. *for* words *r.* cords.